

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 05531 01 OF 02 182005Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 AID-05
PPT-01 SCA-01 EB-08 FEA-01 /068 W
-----182038Z 127331 /43
R 181233Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2777

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 5531

FOLLOW SENT ACTION NEW DELHI FROM CALCUTTA APRIL 18, 1977
REPEATED FOR YOUR ACTION

QUOTE
CALCUTTA 0914

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OTRA, PINS, IN
SUBJ: VISIT TO ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA

1. AN OFFICIAL COLD SHOULDER AND A WARM PRIVATE WELCOME -
THIS IN A VERY FEW WORDS SUMS UP MY VISIT LAST WEEK TO
ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA.

2. THE OFFICIAL COLD SHOULDER WAS MANIFEST WELL BEFORE THE
TRIP BEGAN. REPEATED EFFORTS BY CONGEN IN THE TWO WEEKS
PRECEEDING THE TRIP TO SET UP CALLS FOR ME ON CHIEF MINIS-
TERS AND MINISTERS FOR COMMERCE, INDUSTRY AND TOURISM OF
ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA, AND ON GOVERNOR SINGH IN SHILLONG (HE
HAS ALL THE STATES OF THE NORTHEAST) MET FIRST WITH THE
REPLY THAT NOTHING COULD BE DONE UNTIL NOTIFICATION WAS
RECEIVED FROM NEW DELHI AND THEN WITH EVEN MORE VAGUE RES-
PONSES. ONLY APPOINTMENTS THAT WERE SET PRIOR TO MY ARRIVAL
WERE ON THE HOME SECRETARY IN GAUHATI (THE CHIEF SECRETARY WAS
AWAY) AND THE CHIEF SECRETARY IN SHILLONG, AND AS IT TURNED
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 05531 01 OF 02 182005Z

OUT THESE WERE THE ONLY OFFICIALS I WAS ALLOWED TO SEE.
ASSAM HOME SECRETARY BHASKAR BARUA, ON WHOM I CALLED IMME-
DIATELY AFTER ARRIVAL IN GAUHATI MORNING APRIL 11, ANNOUNCED
IN A FRIENDLY BUT EMBARRASSED MANNER THAT THE ENTIRE
GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM WAS OUT OF TOWN AND NO ONE WOULD BE
BACK UNTIL APRIL 16 OR 17 AT THE EARLIEST AND EVEN THEN
HE COULD NOT BE SURE, A PROPOSITION WHICH CLEARLY WAS NOT

CREDIBLE. BARUA MET MY STATEMENT THAT I HOPED TO CALL ON GOVERNOR SINGHDYUN SHILLONG ON APRIL 12 WITH A KNOWING LOOK OF SKEPTICISM.

3. MEGHALAYA CHIEF SECRETARY ROSTOMJI PASSED WORD TO US AFTERNOON APRIL 11 THAT GOVERNOR SINGH WOULD BE VERY BUSY (AS IT WAS COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT THE GOVERNOR WAS IN SHILLONG ABSENCE COULD NOT BE GIVEN AS AN ESCUSE) AND WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO RECEIVE ME APRIL 12. ROSTOMJI FINALLY CONFIDED TO CONGEN POLITICAL ASSISTANT HB ROY, WHO HANDLED CONTACTS FOR APPOINTMENTS, THAT HE HAD "INSTRUCTIONS FROM NEW DELHI ON IT." KNOWING THIS I MADE ONLY A BRIEF CALL ON ROSTOMJI AFTER ARRIVING IN SHILLONG MORNING APRIL 12, DID NOT RAISE THE ISSUE OF CALLS ON THE GOVERNOR OR GOVERNMENT OF MEGHALAYA CABINET OFFICERS, AND DID NOT TRY TO DISCUSS SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. BY CHANCE, THROUGH THE INTERVENTION OF CHAIRMAN OF INDIA CARBON. HIMATSINGKA, I HAD SEEN MEGHALAYA CHIEF MINISTER WILLIAMSON SANGHMA AND EDUCATION MINISTER MARBAIANG IN WAITING ROOM AT GAUHATI AIRPORT FOR ABOUT TWENTY MINUTES MORNING APRIL 11. MARBAIANG SAID HE HADN'T KNOWN I WAS COMING TO SHILLONG AND ADDED WITH ELABORATE COURTESY THAT HE WOULD HAVE LIKED TO BE THERE TO RECEIVE ME. WHEN TOLD THAT WE HAD BEEN AFTER THE MEGHALAYA SECRETARIAT FOR SOME TWO WEEKS WITH REQUESTS FOR APPOINTMENTS, MARBAIANG REPEATEDLY MUTTERED "BLOODY FOOLS", THINKING IT ALL THE RESULT OF ADMINISTRATIVE INEFFICIENCY.

4. PRESUMABLY THIS OFFICIAL RUNAROUND WAS INTENDED IN SOME WAY TO PROTECT THE MEA'S POSITION ON THE CONSULAR DISTRICT
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 05531 01 OF 02 182005Z

ISSUE, THOUGH THERE MAY HAVE BEEN OTHER CONSIDERATIONS AS WELL. IN ANY EVENT, IT SEEMS THAT NO EFFORT WAS MADE TO DISCOURAGE BUSINESS LEADERS FROM MEETING WITH ME, AND THEY WERE EFFUSIVELY FRIENDLY AND HOSPITABLE. I MET EDITORS OF ASSAM TRIBUNE AND LOCAL LANGUAGE ASOM BANI IN GAUHATI MORNING APRIL 11 ANESTHUP EVENING ADDRESSED SOME SIXTY TOP LOCAL BUSINESSMEN AT THE GAUHATI MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION, AND HAD DINNER AFTERWARDS WITH MOST PROMINENT AMONG THEM. THEY SPOKE FREELY ON LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLITICS AND ON FOREIGN POLICY, AND IN THIS LAST AREA THERE WERE MANY GOOD WISHES EXPRESSED FOR CLOSER RELATIONS BETWEEN THE US AND INDIA. IN SHILLONG I HAD LUNCH WITH FORMER GOV MEGHALAYA INDUSTRIES MINISTER STANLEY NICHOLS-ROY, NOW AN MLA AND LEADER OF THE APHLC (A HILL TRIBAL PARTY) OPPOSITION IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. (NICHOLS-ROY IS MARRIED TO AN AMERICAN AND I FIRST MET HIM WHEN HE CAME TO THE CONGEN SEVERAL MONTHS BACK TO DISCUSS A PASSPORT PROBLEM CONCERNING HIS SON.)

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 05531 02 OF 02 182036Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 AID-05
PPT-01 SCA-01 EB-08 FEA-01 /068 W
-----182038Z 127675 /43

R 181233Z APR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2778

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 5531

CHIEF SECRETARY ROSTOMJI PUT ME IN CONTACT WITH NICHOLS-ROY,
SO APPARENTLY HE HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS ON THAT PARTICULAR
MATTER, AND HIS INTERVENTION GAVE THE MEETING A STAMP OF
OFFICIAL APPROVAL. I SPENT APRIL 13-14 AT A TEA PLANTATION
IN JORHAT AREA AND MET WITH HALF A DOZEN OR SO ESTATE
MANAGERS, WHO WERE ALSO QUITE FRIENDLY, RELAXED AND UN-
RESTRAINED IN DISCUSSION OF LOCAL AND NATIONAL POLITICS.

5. OVERALL IMPRESSION IS THAT THE EMERGENCY DID NOT GREATLY
AFFECT ASSAM - AND HAD EVEN LESS IMPACT IN MEGHALAYA - AND
THAT ITS WITHDRAWAL HAS LIKEWISE BEEN RELATIVELY LITTLE
FELT THUS FAR. THE JANATA WAVE WAS ONLY A RIPPLE IN THESE
TWO STATES; IN ASSAM JANATA WON ONLY THREE OUT OF THE
FOURTEEN LOK SABHA CONTESTS AND CONGRESS TEN, AND IN MEGHALAYA
THE HSPDP (A HILL TRIBAL PARTY) TOOK ONE AND CONGRESS THE
OTHER OF THE STATE'S TWO SEATS. EVERYONE WE SPOKE WITH GAVE
PRETTY MUCH THE SAME REASONS: THERE WERE FEW ARRESTS UNDER
THE EMERGENCY AND VERY LITTLE FORCED STERILIZATION (NONE IN
MEGHALAYA), AND SANJAY GANDHI NEVER MEDDLED IN THE TWO
STATES' POLITICS. OTHER REASONS FREQUENTLY CITED WERE THAT
JANATA HAD NO PROMINENT FIGURES IN ASSAM OR MEGHALAYA AND
THAT NONE OF THE BIG NAME JANATA LEADERS BOTHERED TO CAM-
PAIGN IN THE TWO STATES. DESPITE THIS ALMOST EVERYONE SEEMED
TO THINK THAT THE ASSAM STATE CONGRESS GOVERNMENT IS IN
TROUBLE AND WOULD LOSE IF STATE ELECTIONS WERE HELD SOON.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 05531 02 OF 02 182036Z

THE STATE'S LEADING INDUSTRIALIST, P.C. GOENKA, WAS PRE-

DICTABLY A BOOSTER OF CHIEF MINISTER SINHA, BUT OTHERS SAID SINHA WAS TAINTED WITH CORRUPTION AND HIS ADMINISTRATION WAS CONSIDERED INEFFICIENT. THE GENERAL VIEW WAS THAT PEOPLE IN ASSAM WERE DISCONTENTED AND WOULD VOTE CONGRESS OUT IF GIVEN A CHANCE. GOENKA AND ANOTHER GAUHATI BUSINESSMAN SAID THAT THE REVOCATION OF THE EMERGENCY HAS ALREADY MADE LABOR "MORE DIFFICULT", BUT OTHER BUSINESSMEN SAID THERE HAS BEEN NO NOTICEABLE EFFECT SO FAR. THE TEA ESTATE MANAGERS I MET IN THE JORHAT AREA SAID THEIR RELATIONS WITH LABOR HAD NOT BEEN AFFECTED IN ANY WAY BY THE END OF THE EMERGENCY. THEIR MAIN CONCERN NOW SEEMED TO BE TO EXPAND ACREAGE AS FAST AS POSSIBLE THOUGH ALL WERE SKEPTICAL THAT TEA WOULD KEEP ITS CURRENT HIGH PRICE FOR LONG. SEVERAL ALSO SAID PEOPLE WERE DISCONTENTED WITH CHIEF MINISTER SINHA'S GOVERNMENT AND WOULD VOTE IT OUT IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD.

6. IN SHILLONG NICHOLS-ROY WAS ANXIOUSLY AWAITING WORD ON WHETHER THERE WOULD BE FAIR ELECTIONS TO THE MEGHALAYA LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. HE DID NOT SEEM TO SEE MUCH PROSPECT FOR BRINGING DOWN CAPTAIN SANGMA'S CONGRESS CABINET (WHICH HOLDS 40 OF THE 59 SEATS IN THE MEGHALAYA ASSEMBLY) BY DEFECTIONS, BUT HE DID THINK THAT THE APHLC WOULD MAKE GAINS IF ELECTIONS WERE HELD SOON (IT NOW HAS 14 SEATS). HE HAD A LONG TALE OF WOE ABOUT HOW UNFAIRLY THE APHLC HAD BEEN TREATED IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS; THE ELECTION COMMISSIONER HAD DENIED IT THE RIGHT TO USE ITS RECOGNIZED ELECTORAL SYMBOL (ON GROUNDS THAT WITH THE DEFECTION LAST YEAR OF A LARGE NUMBER OF ITS MLAS TO CONGRESS THE PARTY HAD CEASED TO EXIST) AND CONGRESS HAD RESORTED TO DIRTY TRICKS" AGAINST IT. AMONG OTHER THINGS, CONGRESS TOOK REMARKS BY MORARJI DESAI ABOUT STATEHOOD AND DISTORTED THEM IN SUCH WAY AS TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT JANATA WANTED TO CONSOLIDATE SMALL STATES; THEN CONGRESS PROPAGANDISTS CHARGED THAT THE APHLC'S IDENTIFICATION WITH

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 05531 02 OF 02 182036Z

JANATA MEANT THAT IT SUPPORTED SUCH VIEWS. UNFORTUNATELY IT WORKED, NICHOLS-ROY SAID, FOR IN MEGHALAYA THERE IS ONLY ONE ISSUE, THE FEAR OF THE HILL TRIBAL PEOPLE (WHO MAKE UP 80 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION) THAT OTHER ETHNIC ELEMENTS WILL ENCROACH ON THEM AND DOMINATE THEM. FOR THIS REASON THE APHLC INTENDS TO AVOID IDENTIFICATION WITH JANATAS IN THE FUTURE AND TO REMAIN A STRICTLY REGIONAL PARTY. ALSO FOR THIS REASON, NICHOLS-ROY THINKS CONGRESS - BEING A NATIONAL PARTY - HAS LITTLE FUTURE IN MEGHALAYA.

7. INFORMATION CONCERNING OIL INDIA FOLLOWS BY SEPTTEL.
SIGNED KORN
UNQUOTE

SCHNEIDER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PROVINCE, TRAVEL REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 18-Apr-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NEWDE05531
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770134-0604
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770447/aaaabojx.tel
Line Count: 225
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 71703aa3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2775826
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT TO ASSAM AND MEGHALAYA
TAGS: OTRA, PINS, PINT, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/71703aa3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009